A

SERMON

Preached before the

KING

At *WHITE-HALL*,

On *Decemb.* 1. M. DC. LXVII.

Being the First Sunday in ADVENT.

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S. JOHN vi. 14.

Then those Men, when they saw the Miracle which Jesus did, said, Of a truth this is that Prophet that should come into the World.

THE Text is the Conclusion of a Story that reaches from the beginning of the Chapter to this Verse.

The persons concerned in it were of the *Jewish* Nation: a Nation antiently famous and flourishing; but at that time, under the yoke of a *Roman* Conquest: from which they yet hop't for deliverance, by a *Prophet*, whom they lookt for about that time to come into the World.

In this Critical time, comes our Lord *Jesus* to shew himself; poor and conteptible to see to, but withal so *mighty in word and deed*, that many believed him to be that Prophet; the Rulers knew not what to think of him, and the People

flockt after him in multitudes, which way ſoever he went.

In this Chapter He went over the *Sea* of *Galilee* (ſo they call it, though in truth 'tis but a *Lake*) the People, about 5000 of them, went about the Lake to meet him. The place where they found him was Deſert, they were farr from any houſe or home, what Proviſions they brought with them were ſpent, and they ſeemed to be in no ſmall diſtreſs; which He mercifully Conſidered, and miraculouſly Relieved. Out of that ſmall pittance which one * *Lad* had brought with him, He furniſhed a ſufficient meal for 5000 perſons, and cauſed twelve Baskets to be filled with thoſe Fragments they had left.

* παιδάριον, Verſ. 9.

This they all ſaw, and were amaz'd at the thing, and magnified the Perſon, whom they could Judg to be no other than what himſelf profeſt that He was, namely, that He was *That Prophet that ſhould come into the World.*

Which Judgment of theirs, how Reaſonable it was on their part, and what the Uſe of it ſhould be to us, are the things I am now to conſider.

The Reaſon of their Judgment ſtands briefly thus: They lookt for a Prophet to come about that time; and that he ſhould make himſelf known

known to 'em by Miracles: They had heard a great Fame of Chriſt, and now they ſaw him do a great Miracle; Therefore they concluded that He muſt be that Prophet.

Firſt, That the *Jews* did look for one to come into the World, one *that ſhould be Born* of their Nation; a great *Prophet*, a *Meſſias*, one Anointed of God, for the Revealing of his Will, and for the Redemption of his People; this is acknowledg'd on all hands. It was a chief Article of the Jewiſh Faith, the very *Hope* and Expectation *of Iſrael*: For, *to them were committed the Oracles of God*; in which they had Promiſes and Prophecies of him, almoſt from the beginning of the World, to the end of their Scriptures. The time would fail me, if I ſhould go about to reckon them. But methinks a ſhort reckoning may ſerve, when I conſider, that *Moſes* to theſe Jews was *inſtar omnium*: He was the Man *in whom they did truſt*, and he Propheſied of ſuch a Meſſias to come, *Deut.* xviii. 15, & 18. *verſ.* 'Tis a remarkable Text, and therefore I quote you both the place and the words. *Verſe* 15. *Moſes* ſpeaks to the People of *Iſrael*, in his own words, *The Lord thy God will raiſe up unto thee a Prophet from the midſt of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me, unto him*

ſhall ye hearken: and then to aſſure them, that he ſaid not this of himſelf, he repeats the words that God ſpoke to him upon Mount *Sinai* to this purpoſe, verſe 18. *I will raiſe them up a Prophet from among their Brethren like unto thee.* Now, that Chriſt was one of their Brethren, the Jews cannot but acknowledg: and that Chriſt was like unto *Moſes*, we Chriſtians are able to ſhew them. But to ſpare us that trouble, they ſay, this Text was not meant of the Meſſias. Of whom then? why, of ſuch Prophets as God would raiſe up from time to time in his Church. But there were many ſuch Prophets, and the Text ſpeaks expreſly but of one: whom therefore *Aben Ezra* * will have to be *Joſhua* the ſucceſſor of *Moſes*. *Abraham Seba* * ſayes, it is intended of the Prophet *Jeremy* But neither This, nor That, nor any other Prophet, can fill up the Character of this perſon; of whom God ſayes, he ſhall be כמוך *like unto thee*: *Moſes* ſayes כמוני he ſhall be *like unto me*. For never was there any Prophet כמשה *like unto Moſes*, Deut. xxxiv. 10. nor ever will be, ſayes *Maimonides*, except the Meſſias, *who*, ſayes he *, *ſhall be a great Prophet, and like to our Maſter Moſes.*

* In their Comments on the place.

* In *Teſhuba* Cap. 9.

It may ſeem ſtrange, that our Modern Jews, who ſo paſſionately dote on the hopes of a Meſſia,

Meſſia, ſhould be ſo loath to hear of him in this Propheſie. But there is no ſtrangeneſs in it, to him that conſiders the Witchcraft of Contradiction. They think themſelves bound to find another ſenſe of the words, becauſe the Apoſtles of Chriſt have quoted them in this ſenſe. St. *Peter*, Act. iii. 22. St *Steven*, Act. vii. 37. both of them, in expreſs terms, applying this Propheſie to Chriſt. Not to ſay that others alſo do it in general words; namely, *Philip*, Joh. i. 45. St. *Paul* in the xxvi. & xxviii. Chap. of the *Acts*. Nay, our Saviour himſelf, *Joh.* v. 45. telling the Jews, *that Moſes wrote concerning him.* All which Quotations in the New Teſtament, as they do prejudice the Modern Jews, againſt the true underſtanding of this Propheſie; ſo they plainly prove, that it was thus underſtood by their Forefathers: For elſe it had been a vain thing for the Apoſtles to go about to prove Chriſt to be the Meſſias, out of ſuch a Text as thoſe Jews underſtood in a different ſenſe: Eſpecially when there were ſo many other Texts of Scripture, which the Jews do acknowledg to be meant of the Meſſias, that could have been as eaſily alledg'd by them, and as aptly applyed to Chriſt, as this Propheſie which is now in Queſtion.

For

For the proof of what I ſay, I ſhall produce two or three ſuch Texts; and my choice ſhall be of thoſe, that not only foretold that a Meſſias was to come, but alſo markt out the time when he was to be expected: *Gen.* xlix. 10. is *Jacobs* Propheſie, that *The Scepter ſhall not depart from* Juda, *till* Shilo *come*; that is, *there ſhall never ceaſe to be Kings and Princes of the houſe of* Juda, *till the Meſſias come*: So both the *Targums* render it; and ſo does *Onkelos*, whoſe Paraphraſe is of greateſt authority among the Jews, and who himſelf lived about 40 years before Chriſts Incarnation. Another Propheſie there was, but along time after this; it was foretold when the ſecond Temple was building, that *The deſire of the Nations*, in *Haggai*; *The Lord whom they ſought*, in *Malachi*; ſhould *come*, and that *ſuddenly*, *to that Temple*. The texts are *Haggai* ii. 7. & *Mal.* iii. 1. Both which places are clearly meant of the Meſſias, and the latter of them is ſo interpreted by *Aben Ezra**, and *David Kimchi**, two of the learnedeſt Blaſphemers of Chriſt in the Jewiſh Nation.

* In their Comments on the places.

I ſhall offer but one Teſtimony more, and it is from that Prophet, whom I think no man, without invincible obſtinacy, can read and conſider, and not be a Chriſtian; ſo unqueſtionable he

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is for his Authority, ſo evident in his Predictions, ſo punctual in the Circumſtances of them: I mean the Prophet *Daniel*; who bewailing the deſolation of *Jeruſalem*, and the 70 years Captivity of his Nation, was told by an Angel they ſhould ſoon be reſtor'd, and *Jeruſalem* be rebuilt. But farther, that after 7 times 70, that is, after 490 years, from the going forth of the Commandement for the rebuilding of *Jeruſalem*, they ſhould be a Nation no more; That within the laſt 70 of theſe years, the Meſſias ſhould come, *the holy One ſhould be Anointed*; *Dan.* ix. 24. and that he ſhould be *cut off*, but *not for himſelf*, Verſe 26. and then, that a *Prince ſhould come*, and *deſtroy the holy City and the Sanctuary*, as there it follows in the end of the Chapter.

How Eaſie a thing was it for any conſidering man in Chriſts daies, to Reckon within a ſmall matter of thoſe 490 years? I ſay, within a ſmall matter; becauſe there might be ſome doubt where to fix the Beginning of that reckoning: whether it ſhould begin at the Firſt Commandment, for the rebuilding of *Jeruſalem*; or, at the Laſt, which was about 50 years after. Which poſſibly was the cauſe, why R. *Nechonia ben Hakkana*, who lived about 50 years before Chriſts Incarnation, ſaid, as *Grotius* * tells us,

* *De veritate Chriſt. Relig. l.* 5. §. 14.

(for I know not his Author) we are now within 50 years of the Messias; and R. *Jose*, who lived about 50 years after Christs death, said, according to R. *Jacob* in *Caphtor*, we are now past the time of the Messia.

Certain it is, that the 100 years between these, was a time of great expectation, of some extraordinary Person to come into the World: which Expectation began in *Judea*, and from thence it spread even all the World over. Among the *Gentiles* there were strange Intimations of an Universal King that was then to be born; as may appear from *Cicero* [a], and *Virgil* [b], from *Suetonius* [c], and *Tacitus* [d], in their several Writings. Among the *Jews* it was a Question in every mans mouth, *where is he that should be born?* so the *Pharisees* to *John Baptist*, *Art thou he?* and so the *Baptist* to our Saviour, *Art thou he that should come?* so the People among themselves, *Is not this that Prophet?* They were at it upon every Occasion, and dearly they paid for it at last. For they put the Nations about them all into a ferment with these Discourses, and then into a rage with their Commotions, which could never be laid but with the Destruction of their Temple and Government; according to those Propheſies, *which being read to them in their*

Syna-

a *L.* 1 *Epist.* 1. & *l.* 2. *de Divinatione.*
b *Eclog.* 4.
c *De Vespasiano, c.* 4.
d *Hist. l.* 4.

Synagogues every Sabbath-day, as St. *Paul* * ſaith, *they fulfil'd, becauſe they underſtood not.* * Act. xiii. 27.

And as for thoſe obſtinate wretches, whom God ſuffered to outlive that Deſtruction, when the terrour of it was a little over, and they begin to recollect themſelves, and to conſider what hope they had left of the Promiſe; the *Scepter* being now departed from *Juda*, there being no *Temple* left, and the 490 *years* long ſince expired; what a Confuſion they were in, 'tis not poſſible to expreſs, nor eaſie to imagine, without reading of their *Talmud*, where * in the 4th part, 4th. Book, 11th. Chap. you may find them caſting up among themſelves, what hopes they had left of their Meſſias. One reflects upon that Propheſie of the School of *Elias*, that the World ſhould laſt 6000 years; 2000 years before the Law *, and 2000 under the Law, and 2000 under the Meſſias: which makes well for us, becauſe Chriſt came much about the year 4000; but made ill for them, becauſe that year was then paſt and gone. Another makes mention of two old Propheſies, that the Meſſias ſhould come after 85 Jubilees, that is, about the year 4200; but thoſe Propheſies gave them no comfort, that year alſo being paſt and gone. A third ſaid, all our prefixed times are at an

* In *Sanhedrin*, c. *Chelek.*

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end; a fourth, that the Messias was come already and lived somewhere *incognito*; a fifth, wisht the bones of him broken that should keep any more reckoning of time. A strange and a certain accomplishment of that most antient Propheſie* concerning the state of the Jews after their rejection of the Messiah; that *God would smite them with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart; that they should grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness*; a Propheſie that ought not to be lightly past by, but I must not go beyond my line.

* Deuter. xxviii. 28, 29.

I have shewed, that our Prophet was foretold, and that a time was set for his coming, and that in Christs daies that time was come. Now what could the Jews desire more but some Token to know him by? And such a Token was this σημεῖον in my Text. It signifies properly a Sign, though we translate it a Miracle; which obliges me to shew what a Miracle is, and how fitly it was ordein'd to be the Sign of the great Prophet.

A Miracle, according to the derivation of the word, is such a work as is apt to raise Wonder and Admiration in us. And admiration proceeds from the ignorance of causes. Therefore Fools wonder at many things, because they know

know the causes of few things: Wise men admire at those things which proceed from occult causes in nature, though the things are very usual and ordinary: All men admire at those things which are unusual and extraordinary; which if they also exceed the whole power of nature, so far as any man is able to judge of it, then they are properly and strictly called Miracles.

In every work, by the laws of Nature, there must be an Active cause naturally able and ready to work; and there must be a Passive matter fitly disposed for it: without both which, nothing can be done.

If any thing be done without either of these, then it is said to be Supernatural. 1st. On the Passive part, when either there is no matter at all, as in the Creation of the world out of nothing; or, when there is such a matter as has no fitness for such a use, as it was in the Creation, and will be at the Resurrection, of living man out of the dust of the Earth. 2ly. In respect of the Agent, when the work is above the reach of any natural cause, above the power of any Creature that we can know of, as the staying of the Sun in *Joshuah*'s daies; or when no second cause is imployed in it, or such a cause as has no disposition for it, no activity but

what is Supernaturally given it; in all such cases a work is said to be Miraculous.

This kind of work God is pleased to make use of, as the Seal of his Commission to any Person, as the Attestation of his hand to any Doctrine: so that if any Person or Doctrine be Blameless in other respects, and only Questionable for its Authority; it sufficiently clears its Authority to be from God, that he sends it, or suffers it to come to us, with the Testimony of Miracles.

Thus *Moses*, being sent from God to the people of *Israel*, was appointed to take two or three Witnesses along with him; namely, two or three Signs, to assure that captious people, that he was truly a Prophet sent from God. First he turns his Rod into a Serpent, and then that Serpent into a Rod again; he makes his hand in an instant become leprous, and immediately restores it again; he takes up water out of the River, and poures it out perfect blood upon the ground.

Thus also, that Prophet *like unto Moses*, *Deut.* xviii. 15. was promised to come with signs like him, Verse 21, 22. To the same effect are many other Texts of the old Testament. But I think that one is enough, if I can show that

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the Jews did believe it, that they depended upon it, and were ready on all occasions to exact this proof of a Messias. It is not unlike, that the Devil himself (who is certainly a great Textuary) had some thought of this, when he tempted our Saviour to command the stones to become bread. But as for the Jews, it was unquestionably their way; which St. *Paul* observes, 1 *Cor.* i. 21. *the Jews require a sign*; tell them of their Prophet, and presently they call for a Sign. How often were they upon these termes with our Saviour? He could be no Messias for them, unless he would shew 'em a Sign. Though some of them before hand were resolv'd not to be convinc'd with it, yet none of 'em were to be satisfied without it; nay not without many signs, as he tells them, Joh. i. 5. * *Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.* And 'tis observable of *Barcozba*, that famous Impostor, who set up for a Messias their own way, pretending to make 'em a great flourishing People, which so won him their hearts, that for a while they generally adher'd to him; yet at last distrusting him for want of success, they put him to death only for want of a sign. Which though *Maimonides* * denies, as also he does this Doctrine, for

* Joh. iv. 49.

* In *Hilcheth Melachim*, c. 11.

for fear of being preſt with the undeniable Miracles of our Saviour; yet the *Talmud* affirms both theſe, as to that of *Barcozba* *, IV. 4 11. And as to this Doctrine † I. 1. 1. as alſo the *Midraſh Coheleth*, c. 1. teaching, that *all paſt Miracles ſhall be as nothing in compariſon of the Miracles of the Meſſias.* Which being the antient Tradition of the Jews, founded in the promiſes of God, deriv'd to them in the propheſies of Scripture, which Scriptures were read to them every Sabbath day; it is no wonder that the Jews did ſet their hearts on this way of tryal.

* *Hid.* in *Sanhedrin.*

† In *Beracboth c. Mecmathe korin.*

It remains to ſhew, how Chriſt did anſwer their Expectation. Who as he was a Prophet above all other Prophets, ſo his Miracles were farr above all other Miracles. Never any one did Miracles like him, even his Enemies being Judges; no nor all that ever were before him according to their own computation. For whereas all the Prophets before him, in three or four thouſand years, did but 74 Miracles, beſides *Moſes* who did 76 if their reckoning * were true; Our Saviour alone in three or four years time at moſt, did more than it was poſſible to keep account of; inſomuch that as St. *John* ſays * in a proverbial expreſſion, if they were all to be reckoned

* *v. Menaſſeh ben Iſrael's* Conciliator, Part. 1. Q. 11. in *Deut.*

* Joh. xxi. 25.

reckoned together, *the whole World could not contain the Books that ſhould be written.*

Whatſoever any man elſe did of this kind, whether Prophet or Apoſtle, he did it by a borrowed and limited Power; which he could neither communicate to others, nor exerciſe it himſelf, but by Gods eſpecial appointment: but for Chriſt, who had *the fulneſs of the Godhead dwelling in him*; he did what he pleaſed, and when he pleaſed, by himſelf, or by others, being determin'd by nothing but by his own Goodneſs and Wiſdom.

What part of the Creation, doth not afford us an inſtance of his Power? who had the bleſſed Angels at his call, and the damned Spirits ſubject to his will; who commanded the ſeas and the winds and they obeyed him; who guided the Fiſhes in the deep, which way he pleaſed; but eſpecially for men, that were his peculiar charge, he provided againſt all their neceſſities and wants, their infirmities and miſeries. He fed them by Miracle, he heal'd them by Miracle, of ſundry diſeaſes which were otherwiſe incurable: of inveterate Dropſies and Leproſies, of a Palſie of 38 years, of Blindneſs from ones birth; what could one do more, but to raiſe men from the dead? and thus he did divers, particularly *Lazarus* who had lain four daies buried in the grave.

And these things he effected, as well absent as present, in an instant as by sensible degrees; by the applying of his hand, by the touch of his garment, by the word of his mouth, by the motion of his will; to shew that any means would serve, that no means were necessary, that all times and places were alike, to the Soveraign vertue that he imploy'd in the working of his Miracles.

Which works being so evident testimonies of a Divine Authority, and being design'd for so universal a Benefit, it was necessary that they should be as evidently and universally known. And this our Saviour seems to have considered in all his Miracles. If any of them were done Privately, which were but few in comparison, he commanded them not to be spoken of, that there might be no suspicion of Imposture. But for the generality of his works, he did them Openly and publiquely; before multitudes, or in throngs; at Feasts, or in Synagogues, or in the streets, and in the open Sun; many of them in the Temple, and that at Passeover times, in the face of his watchful Enemies, and before a whole Nation of witnesses.

This Miracle in my Text, was done in a Desert, but it was in the presence of 5000 persons; whom

whom the Fame of Chriſts works had drawn thither to obſerve him, and therefore they could not well be ſurprized in the manner of it: nor could they be deceived in the Action it ſelf; for they ſaw, and felt, and taſted the effects of it. He fully ſatisfied their hunger; and ſo farr their hopes, that they determined to look for no other Meſſias; being aſſur'd that this was He, *This of a Truth is that Prophet that ſhould come into the world.*

I have done with the reaſon of their Judgment: and ſhould next proceed to the Uſe of it; but that I am ſenſible of an Objection in the way, which ſome have ſtarted at this diſtance of time, to queſtion the Judgment of that age, and to promote the Infidelity of this. I am ſorry there ſhould be any cauſe to mention it; that inſtead of carrying on the Building of God, and helping forward the duty of Chriſtian life, we muſt be put to anſwer thoſe Atheiſts that ſtand pecking at the Foundation. But we muſt be content, ſince God is pleas'd to ſuffer it. It is a vicious World that we live in, and alwaies ſo much Vice, ſo much Unbelief. Perhaps too, we are not farr from that time, of which Chriſt ſaies, *When the Son of Man comes, ſhall he find Faith upon the Earth?* If ſo, we are not like to prevail Luk xviii. 8.

much againſt the Atheiſts. Howſoever we are bound to do our indeavour, and not to leave their Arguments unanſwer'd, though in effect we only leave their Perſons the more unexcuſable.

Their Objection is, that theſe Evangeliſts being Chriſts followers, might boldly aſſert things for the honour of their Maſter and his Cauſe, which for ought we know have been as ſtifly denied by the Oppoſite parties. I propound this Objection in behalf of a ſort of men whoſe Invention is commonly better then their Reading.

For whoſoever is any whit skill'd in Antiquity, muſt needs know, that the Ground of this Objection is falſe; Jews, Heathens, Mahometans, as many as write of this matter, do all confeſs, that our Saviour did work Miracles. For the *Mahometans*, they are *but of yeſterday, and know nothing*: only this they ſay in general, for the brutiſh proof of their ſenſual Religion; that as Chriſt came with Miracles, ſo *Mahomet* came with the Sword. As for *Jews* and *Heathens*, who in Chriſts time, and after it, abounded with Writers and Learned men; there is no reaſon to imagine, but if they had had any Colour for it, they would as fiercely have denied Chriſts Miracles with their Pens, as they perſecuted his Followers with Fire and Sword. But ſeeing it was in

v. Rycaut of the *Ottoman* Empire, *l.* 2. *c.* 2, 3.

in vain to Deny thoſe things, which ſo many thouſands knew to be true; and the memory of which, was continually revived, by thoſe freſh Miracles which the Primitive Chriſtians wrought in Chriſts name: therefore either they choſe to take no notice of them at all in their Writings; or if they mention'd Chriſts Miracles, they aſcrib'd them to Magick or Diabolical Cauſes. And what can one ask more of an Enemy, as to matter of Fact; then that he ſhould either ſpeak out and confeſs it, or ſhew by his ſilence that he knows not how to deny it? No *Jew* can with reaſon deny Chriſt's Miracles; ſince they are confeſt by his own *Talmud* in divers places, ſpecially * in the 4th *Part*, the 9th. *Book*. Nor no *Heathen* could in *Tertullian's* or *Juſtin Martyr's* daies; unleſs thoſe Learned men were monſtrous ſilly and impudent, who durſt * tell their Emperours, they might finde proofs of them in *Pilat's* Records which were then at *Rome*. They were ſuch irrefragable Proofs, that neither Jew nor Heathen had any thing to ſay to them, but this, that they were done by *Magick*; which may be ſaid of any thing, and ſignifies juſt nothing: or, that they were done by *Evill Spirits*, which will not ſerve the turn of our Atheiſt, who is as unwilling to believe that there is a Devil, as that there is a God.

* In *Aboda Zara*.

* *Juſtin M.* in *Apol.* 2. *Tertull.* in *Apol. c.* 21. *v. Euſeb. Hiſt. l.* 2. *c.* 2.

But

But (beſides theſe Quotations, which it were eaſie to multiply, if it were ſo proper for this place;) beſides theſe, we have the greateſt Aſſurance that in reaſon can be wiſht for, of the truth of theſe Miracles. For what aſſurance can be had at ſuch a diſtance, concerning things done 1600 years agoe? The beſt that can be expected, is a Hiſtory written by ſome credible Perſons that lived in thoſe times. And ſuch a Hiſtory this is, or there is no ſuch in the World. For that it was written by them whoſe Names it bears, no Adverſary ever queſtion'd, and all Chriſtians have acknowledg'd, that have written from Age to Age ever ſince. Nor is it queſtioned, that the things here written are the ſame that were taught by the twelve Apoſtles: which Apoſtles our Saviour took along with him to be the conſtant Witneſſes of all his actions; and they profeſs to have been preſent with him at moſt of the things that are here Written. Men ſo far from being ſuſpected of any Deceit, that their Simplicity and Ignorance has been their only Accuſation. And that ſo many, ſuch men, ſhould conſpire together, to fain incredible things, and to impoſe them upon the faith of Mankind: Why they ſhould do this, without any Temptation of Honour, or Wealth, or Preferment; nay with

certain

certain Assurance of persecution, and misery, and cruel death, which their Master foretold them, and they lookt for no other, and they were not mistaken in this: How they durst Adventure such stories with such Circumstances, of time, places, and persons, which they knew certainly would be sifted, and might easily have been disproved, if they had not been true; all this were as prodigiously strange in Them, as it would be now in Us, if we should not believe them.

But say, it were possible that they might be deceived themselves in Christs Miracles, yet sure they could not be so in his Resurrection; and I think whosoever believes his Resurrection, is much to blame if he doubts of any of his Miracles. This being that Sign of the Prophet *Jonas*; which Christ said * he would reserve to the last place, to confound them that would not be Convinc't, and were therefore not worthy of any Other sign. * Mat. xii. 39.

But what say they of his Resurrection? Jews and Heathens say in the General, that he was put to death. These Apostles tells us all the Particulars of it; and say farther, that after three daies he Rose again from the dead. That he show'd himself Alive to them; First to one or two at a time, then to all the twelve together,

ther, then to 500 of his followers at once, most of whom were alive when these things were written: but especially to those twelve Apostles, he shew'd himself by many Infallible proofs; being Seen of them, and Conversing with them, for forty daies; at the end whereof, being together with him upon Mount *Olivet*, after much discourse they Beheld him taken up in a bright cloud, which carried him out of their sight.

Now is it reasonable to imagine, that all these men, all this while, had no use of their Reason, or had not so much as Common sense about them? For if that Relation was false, then one of these things must be true: that either they were besides their Senses when they believ'd this; or, they were out of their Wits, when they affirm'd it, and laid down their lives for the witnessing of that which they did not believe. And what then shall we say to that world of Christians, that Render'd themselves up to the belief of these men that had so little Reason to believe themselves? 'Tis Prodigious to Think what I am about to say: and yet think it one must, or he can be no Atheist; he must assent to all this which I am about to say. That a poor Young man, of the Meanest birth and breeding, of a most hateful Nation, and hated himself by that

Nation

Nation, for taking upon him to be a Prophet ſent 'em from God, for which he was laid hold of, and put to a bitter and moſt ſhameful Death. That after his death, a few Fiſhermen and others, as Mean as himſelf in all Circumſtances, ſhould ſtill Proclaim that he was that Prophet: and confirm it with a Story of his Reſurrection, and with loud boaſts of Miracles wrought by him and his Followers, all which were utterly Falſe; Promiſing all them that would believe in him, nothing in this world but Affliction and cruel Death, which their own Sufferings prov'd to be True: That ſuch men, with no other Charms, ſhould work ſuch a Faith, in all the Wiſeſt part of Mankind; and that with ſo laſting an Impreſſion as Time has not been able to deface, no, nor Vice neither, which is the thing that makes Them deſire to deface it. That ſo Impregnable a Faith ſhould be bottom'd on ſo foul an Impoſture, (Pardon me great God that I lend breath to their Blaſphemies) 'tis a thing ſo prodigiouſly Incredible, that it could never enter into any man's head, unleſs he were for his Luſt's ſake as great a Monſter of Credulity, as I have ſhew'd him, in other reſpects, to be a very Monſter of Unbelief.

I fear this Diſcourſe may have been larger then the Occaſion; nay I hope it rather in this place; and would to God that it were wholly Superfluous, that there were no more Unbelievers in This world, then there will be in the Other; and then I am ſure there would be Few enough.

But I have now done with Them, and am to ſpeak to your ſelves; to You that believe the holy Scriptures, & deſire to make a profitable Uſe of 'em. And the Uſe of this Scripture is, to obſerve what *theſe men* in my Text, did according to Reaſon, and (allowing for the difference of Circumſtances) to do the ſame Thing our ſelves. Namely, if we have any Prophet yet to come, and the promiſe of Miracles to know him by; then it is our Duty, when we ſee thoſe Miracles, to acknowledge that Prophet: but if we have no ſuch Prophet to expect, and no more Miracles to look for; then it behoves us to make much of thoſe Miracles, and that Prophet that we have already, and to look for No other. This appears to be the natural conſequence of my Text.

It hath been proved, that Chriſt is that Prophet, of whom God has foretold us from the beginning of the World: and this Prophet has told us, * *Behold, I am with you to the end of the World.*

*Mat. xxviii. 20.

But have we any other to look for? any other

other Prophet to come? any farther Miracles to know him by? It ſhould ſeem that we have: For Chriſt ſaies words to that purpoſe; and he ſaies it not lightly, but he laies great weight upon it, *Behold*, ſaies he*, *I tell you of this before. There ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhow great Signs and Wonders; inſomuch that (if it were poſſible) they ſhall deceive the very Elect.* Particularly, 2 Theſſ. ii. 9. *That Son of perdition; whoſe coming ſhall be after the working of Satan, with all power, and Signs, and lying wonders.* So likewiſe, 1 Tim. iv. 1. *The Spirit ſpeaks expreſly, that thus it ſhall be in the Latter times.* All which things are confirmed by other places of Scripture: and are applyed by St. *John* to the ſecond Beaſt; that hath *horns like a Lamb, but ſpeaks like a Dragon*: Whoſe Miracles are ſet forth, *Rev.* xiii. 13. & xvi. 14. & xix. 20. &c.

* Mat. xxiv. 24, 25. Which Text is thus applyed by the Fathers, *Chryſoſtom*, *Auſtin*, &c.

That the firſt Beaſt which St. *John* there deſcribes with ſeven Heads, was the *Heathen*, and Imperial *Rome*, I think all Interpreters do agree. Whether the ſecond Beaſt be the Papal *Rome*, it is not our buſineſs now to enquire, let them ſee to it that are her Worſhippers and Followers. But it is our buſineſs to know whom to beware of; and Chriſt has warn'd us of

ſome body that ſhall pretend to Miracles, and we know of none, but the Papal *Rome*, that does pretend to them. She makes it one of her Marks, and vaunts that ſhe is to be known by her Miracles.

But what then? did not Chriſt promiſe Miracles to his Church? and ought not His Promiſe to be made good? It is moſt true, that he did promiſe, and that he has perform'd, we have ſufficient proofs of it, both in Scripture, and in the Records of the Primitive Church. For it was neceſſary that our great Prophet ſhould be made known to us; as well in his Doctrine, as in his Perſon; that the Chriſtian Faith ſhould be planted and ſetled by Miracles. But when this Doctrine was written and publiſht, and where this Faith was planted and generally received; Then there was no ſuch neceſſity; Then it was enough to ſay, *thus it is written*; which Writings were as obligatory to all them that had received this Doctrine, as if they had been preacht to them ſeverally by perſons riſen from the dead. Of which thoſe Fathers were ſo throughly ſatisfied that lived in thoſe times, when moſt part of the world was already converted; that they plainly profeſt, that now the

v. Ambroſ. in 1 Cor. xii. *in fine.*

the time of Miracles was at an end. They are few and rare now, if any, ſaith *Chryſoſtome* in *Hom.* 4. on *Mat.* There are more feign'd ones amongſt falſe Chriſtians, then true ones amongſt the true; ſaith the Author of the Imperfect work, *Hom.* 49. 'Tis enough for Chriſtians, that the old Miracles are read to them, ſaith St. *Auſtin* *; and for Heathens, that Miracles are yet done by us, though not ſo Frequently, nor ſo Manifeſtly, as in former times.

* *De Civ. Dei l.* 22. *c.* 8, 9, 10.

Little did theſe good men think, that within ſome Ages after they were dead, and in thoſe places where there were no Heathens to convert, there ſhould ariſe a ſect of Chriſtians more abounding with Miracles in ſome one age, than were ever ſeen in all ages of the world before: and the Reaſon is plain, for thoſe Fathers never dreamt of thoſe new Doctrines and deſigns that would have need to be uſher'd in and ſupported with new Miracles; nor of the wickedneſs of thoſe men that holp the Devil to invent them; nor of the groſs ignorance of an after-age, that fitted the people to receive 'em. All which things, had they not conſpired together, it had been Impoſſible for ſuch monſtrous Abſurdities to be

impoſed upon the Faith of ſo great a part of Mankind.

How could thoſe ſtrange Fictions of Purgatory have ever obtain'd; if men had not been fool'd into the belief of them, with pretended Viſions, and Revelations, and Apparions? Who could ever have been ſo Sottiſh, as to adore the works of the Pencil, and the Chizzle; unleſs the dumb things themſelves had been made to move, and ſweat, and talk, and weep for it? What Believer of the true God would ever have ſtoopt to the Invocation of his fellow-creatures? nay to invocate them more then God, (for God is not ſo often pray'd to, as the Virgin *Mary*) but that theſe bleſſed Creatures themſelves, as well as their deluded worſhippers, have been abuſed intolerably by the forgers of Miracles? I ſhall inſtance but in one Doctrine more; I might do it in many, for there is hardly any one of their upſtart Doctrines, which has not been taught or promoted this way; but this is the tranſcendent foppery of all, the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation. A Miracle it ſelf they call it, in their Manual, which teaches them to ſay thus at the Elevation; *Oh Miracle! Oh the Goodneſs* &c. *This is done by no Jugling, but in the open ſight of all*

all the lookers on. And what do the Lookers on Diſcern? Do they ſee any viſible change of the Elements? no, not the leaſt ſhadow of alteration: But what is it that they believe? a Miracle? Nay, more than a Miracle, flat Impoſſibility and Contradiction. A ſubject to be without accidents, and accidents without any ſubject. They believe the ſame body to be at the ſame time in ſo many ſeveral places, and whole in every place; in Heaven, upon Earth, both here, and at *Rome*, and in both the *Indies*. Oh monſtrous belief! had not this need to be ſupported with Miracles? It was propagated by them, and *Bellarmine* * proves it by them, becauſe ſome have ſeen the Hoſt to bleed, others have ſeen a Child in the place of it; and he tells us, that St. *Anthony* of *Padua*'s horſe forſook his Oats to go and worſhip it.

* *de Sacram. Euchariſtiæ, l.* 3. *c.* 8.

I am ſenſible that theſe things are very ridiculous, and therefore I am aſhamed to mention any more of them. And yet, I hope, you will excuſe us, if we mention in our Sermons ſuch things as have been the chief Arguments of theirs; and ſuch Arguments as their great Maſters of Controverſie deſpair not, that ſome may poſſibly be fools enough to believe them. But if I ſhould proceed into their Legends

and

and Lives; if I ſhould ſpread before you the filth of thoſe lewd Romances; I ſhould ſeem to have too little regard to this Place, and to this Preſence. They are ſtuft with ſuch abſurd Tales, ſuch idle and extravagant Prodigies: as if the Devil had invented them in a wanton humour; being not content to have affronted the true Miracles of God, and to have had his Will upon the Doctrine of Chriſt; but he muſt inſult alſo, and ſport himſelf with the Ignorance and Superſtition of Men.

I cannot think of theſe things without ſome wonder at thoſe men, who, knowing that theſe things are written in their own Books, and that ſome of us are able to Read them, can yet be ſo impudent as to revile and ſcoffe at the Reformation. That happy Recovery of Chriſtian Religion! without which, their old Tales would have been Goſpel ſtill; and the Cheat would have proceeded farther ſtill, and 'tis hard to imagine what a Monſter, by this time, Chriſtianity would have grown. I know ſome of them ſay, that they themſelves are the better for it, which yet may be a very great Queſtion. For though the Crafts-men among them are grown more wary of late daies, in ſhewing of their Tricks,

and

and the Writers of them bring their Matters more within compaſs than their Predeceſſors did: yet they can never wipe off the ſhame of their Old doings, while they read Leſſons in their Churches collected out of thoſe Legends; and while they Retain thoſe Doctrines, (nay they make them part of their Creed,) that owe, ſome their Being, and all their Reputation, to thoſe groſs and palpable Impoſtures. For us, we have great cauſe to bleſs God for the Reformation; which, like Chriſtianity when it firſt appear'd in the world, has chaſed away theſe Demons and their Oracles from among us. I do not hear they work any Miracles among us of late daies; unleſs this be a Miracle, which I think is no Wonder, that ſome perſons, for ſome cauſes, are won over to ſo corrupt a Religion. For our parts, we pretend to no new Miracles, nor have any Occaſion, while we content our ſelves with the old Doctrines, While we hold to the Prophet that God has ſent us, we may reſt in thoſe Miracles that He wrought for us. God grant we may be wrought by 'em into a due Faith and Obedience.

Firſt, we owe a duty of Faith to the Doctrines of our Prophet; to all that have been

taught by him and his Apoſtles, and are left written for us in the Holy Scriptures. In which Scriptures, though there be *many things hard to be underſtood, which ignorant and unſtable Souls wreſt to their own Damnation*: yet all thoſe things are Plainly deliver'd, which are Neceſſary for us to know. Which were therefore collected by the Apoſtles into the *Creed*; and own'd by the Fathers under the name of the *Apoſtolical Tradition*: the Profeſſion of which was neceſſary for every man, at his Baptiſm, to make him a *Chriſtian*; and was ſufficient for any man, that was Baptiz'd, to be known by as a Member of the *Catholick* Church.

This is the Tradition, not of one or two, but of all Ages: This is the Faith, not of this or that, but of all Churches: as far as Chriſtianity goes, it is the ſame Faith and Tradition ſtill. This has the ſeal of God to it, in all the Miracles of Chriſt, and of his Apoſtles, and of the Primitive Chriſtians. Whoſoever Adds to it, or Varies from it, (eſpecially if he pretend to Miracles, of which the Scripture has forewarn'd us,) we are bound to defie both Him and his Doctrines. If we hold our ſelves cloſe to this Faith, and if This ſhould happen

happen to deceive us; what have we to ſay? but with St. *Victor*, Oh Lord, it is thou that haſt deceiv'd us; Thou haſt given ſuch plain Demonſtrations, ſuch viſible Teſtimonies, of thy Almighty hand to it; that if This ſhould be falſe, we know not what can be true. For there is no poſſible way of certainty of things removed from bodily ſenſe, no way to make any thing ſurer to our belief; then that is, by which we are made ſure of this, that this Faith, this Chriſtian Doctrine, was taught by that Prophet that was ſent from God.

Laſtly, we owe the duty of Obedience to his Precepts, to thoſe Rules of life which he has given us in the name of God. Rules that, like their Author, are full of Juſtice and Goodneſs; then which nothing can be more fitly contrived, to make us live happily here in This world, and to prepare us for a Better life in the world to come. Nor do they provide only for the Private, but alſo for the Publick. They both Direct and Secure every man in his own proper Station. So that he were neither a Friend to Himſelf, nor a Lover of humane Society, that ſhould not heartily ſubmit to theſe Laws; though he were led to it by no other conſideration, but that

of their own Goodneſs and Utility.

But withall when we conſider, from what hand they come; and by whom, and in what manner they were ſent: how can we acquit our ſelves, in the breach of theſe Laws, of the higheſt Ingratitude and Rebellion againſt Almighty God? That good God, that has been pleaſed to require nothing of us, but ſuch things as of themſelves are truly beſt for us; and yet, as if that were not enough to oblige us, has recommended 'em by ſuch a Prophet, and confirm'd them to us by undeniable Teſtimonies. Unleſs we Obey theſe Laws, what can we expect from Him? what Ought we to think of our ſelves? If the *Jews*, out of a miſunderſtanding of God's Counſel, did oppoſe and reject it; If that whole Generation of men were overwhelmed with ſuch Calamities, as no other Nation ever felt, no other Age ever knew; If their whole Poſterity were ſent wandring about the World, to make us fear that great God that has ſent theſe Examples to our doors: How ſhall We ever hope to eſcape, if we neglect ſo great a Salvation as is now offered to us? What Examples may God make of us in This World? What Judgments muſt we look for in the Other? What Penalties, what meaſure of Wrath, can be too much for ſuch ungrateful

ungrateful Wretches, ſuch Rebels againſt the Supream Majeſty of God?

I beſeech you pardon me this great Vehemence, if any degree of Vehemence can need pardon, in the preſſing of things that ſo infinitely concern you. That theſe things do ſo, we ſhall be more ſenſible hereafter. It is but a little while; and He that is now our Prophet, ſhall come to be our Judge, and ſhall call us to a ſtrict Account before him. Then will the Obſervation of his Laws be a Comfort and a Joy: Then will the Neglect of them cauſe Horror and Deſperation. 'Twill be a reſtleſs Grief to reflect, how eaſily we were won to Neglect them; how eaſily we might have Obſerv'd them. We have yet the Opportunity before us. Good God give us Hearts to Conſider it: Now in this time of *Advent*, ſo to remember the Firſt coming of thy Son, when He came to be our Prophet; that we may be prepared, and ready for his Second coming, when He ſhall come to be our Judge. *To whom*, &c.

THE END.